

**REMARKS**

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated March 24, 2006. Claims 1-40 have been cancelled without prejudice, and new claims 41-80 have been substituted therefore. Claims 40, 56 and 68 are independent. Favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

In the Office Action, the Examiner kindly noted informalities in the claims. All of the prior claims have been cancelled without prejudice, and Applicants believe that new claims 41-80 are proper and definite.

In the Office Action, prior claims 1-40 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being obvious over U.S. Patent 6,308,163 (Du et al.) in view of U.S. Patent 5,522,070 (Sumimoto). As shown above, Applicants have replaced claims 1-40 with new claims 41-80. Applicants submit that new independent claims 40, 56 and 68, together with the remaining claims dependent thereon, are patentably distinct from the cited prior art for the following reasons.

The present invention is directed to methods and systems for load balancing of workflows that require performance of a plurality of activities. As described in the specification, when these activities are to be performed by a plurality of activity servers, and when these activity servers are also used to perform other workflows, bottlenecks in processing can arise due to the transfer of control of the individual activities between the activity servers and the queue that stores the workflows for processing.

The present invention overcomes these difficulties by grouping the activities of a subject workflow into one or more workflow packets, where each such packet may include one or more of the activities. If a workflow packet is retrieved from the queue for performance of an activity

by a particular server, and if transition information indicates that the next activity in sequence can be performed by this server *and* is part of this packet, then this server performs this next activity without transferring the packet back to the queue.

Support for these features may be found throughout the specification, and in particular at page 8 of the specification.

Applicants believe that the prior claims may not have expressed these features with sufficient clarity. Therefore, the prior claims have been replaced with the new claims.

In particular, new independent claim 41 is directed to a method for processing a workflow, wherein the workflow (1) includes a plurality of activities and workflow transition information, (2) is constituted by at least one workflow packet each requiring at least one of the plurality of activities, and (3) is processed by a plurality of activity servers that are operable to process other workflows, each of said plurality of activity servers capable of performing at least one of said plurality of activities.

The method comprises the steps of:

- a) retrieving, from a workflow queue operative to handle said workflow and the other workflows, a workflow packet requiring at least a first one of said plurality of activities to be executed, said workflow packet being retrieved by one of said plurality of activity servers capable of performing the first activity;
- b) performing the first activity, by said one of said plurality of activity servers;
- c) determining a next activity of said workflow that is to be performed immediately following the first activity, based on said workflow transition information;

d) if said one of said plurality of activity servers performs the next activity and if the next activity is required by the retrieved workflow packet, performing the next activity, by said one of said plurality of activity servers;

e) if said one of said plurality of activity servers does not perform the next activity or if the next activity is not required by the retrieved workflow packet, forwarding control of said workflow back to said workflow queue; and

f) repeating steps (a) – (e) as necessary until all of said plurality of activities in said workflow are performed.

New independent claim 56 is a system claim corresponding to method claim 41.

New independent claim 68 is directed to a computer executable program code residing on a computer-readable medium, the program code comprising instructions for causing the computer to perform the method exactly as recited in claim 41.

Applicants have carefully reviewed the prior art cited against the prior claims, but have failed to find therein any teaching or suggestion of the present invention as defined in the new claims. In particular, Applicants have failed to find in the cited prior art any teaching or suggestion of the advantageous transfer control between servers and the queue as now recited in the new independent claims.

The remaining claims depend from a respective one of the independent claims and partake of their novelty.

In light of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 41-80 are patentably distinct from the prior art of record.

Applicants further submit that the application is in proper form for allowance of all claims, and earnestly solicit a notice to that effect.

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Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached by telephone at (212) 969-3314 or by  
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Respectfully submitted,

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